

Connecting with Families



Family means something different in every household! One family might eat home-cooked meals, play games, and read books together, seldom watching television. Another family might eat together only at fast-food restaurants, rarely play board games or read books, but regularly watch selections from a streaming service. So what are some practical ways you can best connect with and support the many diverse kinds of families represented by the students in your class?

AWARENESS

Family configurations change from family to family. A family unit may be one parent (or caregiver) and three children; two grandparents and a grandchild; or two parents and one child. Get to know the families of your students. The challenges faced by families create many opportunities for you to minister to them. Pray for each student and his or her family. Ask God to make you aware of ways to connect with those families and become an agent of His grace to them.

EMPATHY

Difficult situations, such as divorce or separation and illness, are part of some family situations. Children and youth are often under stresses that they themselves don't recognize. Your extra patience, kindness, and nonjudgmental words are crucial for these students! If it's possible, record all parents' (or caregivers') names and contact information. Know how to contact a family to help a student stay connected when he or she misses class. Be sure to pray for families as they go through hard times.

SENSITIVITY

As you talk about families, avoid assumptions about family life. Include references—without sounding negative—to those families whose members are composed of non-traditional members. Be sensitive to children and youth who live in a blended family, shared-custody, or foster situation. Help each student feel valued and loved regardless of his or her home circumstances. As you show acceptance, children and youth will see a picture of the way God loves them!

SUPPORT

Your impact doesn't end when students leave your classroom. As a teacher, you have unique opportunities to help families. Your support can begin with something as simple as a friendly conversation at the end of class, a text message, or a phone call. Letting families know you care—along with creating a safe place for adults as well as their children—is one more way you can support and love both the students you teach and their families.